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A needs-based model of resourcing for schools – time for a national discussion?

1. Background

- 1.1. Teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions, and these are determined by the resources invested in them. As most of these resources are invested by the state, how much, and how they are delivered are political questions.
- 1.2. The OECD acknowledges the central importance of resourcing in discussions about schooling. It states "... expenditure per student is a key policy measure that most directly affects the individual learner, as it acts as a constraint on the learning environment in schools and learning conditions in the classroom".¹
- 1.3. Consideration of a move towards needs-based resourcing has been expressed in a range of papers and reports over many years. In 2007, Annual Conference resolved that a needs-based model for providing staffing to schools be developed. This led to the industrial claim which resulted in the [Secondary School Staffing Group \(SSSG\) report](#), agreed between the Ministry of Education, School Trustees Association, NZSPC, SPANZ and PPTA in 2012.
- 1.4. Papers that have focussed on locally raised funds and decile funding in recent years, such as [A Hierarchy of Inequality, The Decile Divide](#) in 2013, pointed out the various problems, and shortfalls, of the current operational funding approach.
- 1.5. This paper explores what 'needs-based' could mean in terms of the totality of school resourcing.

2. Why this is the right time to discuss school resourcing

The following factors suggest that the time is right for a review of how teaching and learning is resourced.

2.1 Political will?

There have been recent indications from political leaders and ministries that the current resourcing model for schools may be reviewed:

- 2.1.1. Minister Parata has expressed her desire to adjust school funding. In February 2014 the Minister discussed with the Herald on Sunday

¹ [OECD, Education At A Glance 2013](#), OECD Indicators. P. 19



her wish to move towards an 'outcomes based' funding approach. What this means is unclear, and it certainly poses risks, with the clearest being the possibility of a contractual, bulk-funded approach similar to charter schools resourcing.² In July 2013 the Minister told reporters "I don't like deciles" and "We do need to review the way we fund schools and focus more on outcomes rather than blunt proxy".³ The indications are there that a review of funding would be pursued by a future National-led government.

2.1.2. Treasury, a significant policy player, is also interested in school funding. For example, a 2012 paper discussed the efficacy and structure of the Targeted Funding for Educational Achievement (TFEA) component of school operations funding, noting that "A number of factors suggest that the current TFEA funding mechanism may not be the most effective way of targeting resources to low SES students".⁴ In 2013 the Treasury's report on the education sector over the long term noted that it would be "...prudent to assess whether expenditure is allocated to where it is most likely to achieve the highest return in terms of increasing educational attainment and contributing towards economic growth and societal well-being".⁵

2.1.3. While the SSSG report has not yet led to action from the current government, (despite the Secretary for Education agreeing to it), there is still the potential that it could spark a response. Recommendations two and three of the report are:

1. *The parties noted the possible conclusion that the current staffing allocation model is potentially not the right fit for 21st century student/school needs, given it comes from a perspective of limitation of liability rather than a needs-based focus...*
2. *The parties work together to develop an agreed understanding of what a needs-based resourcing model may be, and how it might be used to improve the delivery of staffing.*

2.1.4. The urgency of these recommendations is underlined in a cabinet paper from 2013 which says "... we do not have research or modelling that identifies how much it costs to run a well-managed school..."⁶ While the Ministry has an interest in discussing further with the sector at least the staffing component of a needs-based funding model, and admits its lack of knowledge of the actual costs of running schools, PPTA should take this opportunity and begin the discussion.

² The No Child Left Behind Act in the USA is the most well-known example of outcomes based funding. Standardised tests each year assess student performance, and if required improvements are not made school funding can be reduced.

³ Fea, S. 2013 '[Minister: I don't like deciles](#)' in Southland Times, 1.7.2013 Available from

⁴ Treasury Report, 8 June 2012. *The impact of socio-economic status on student achievement* Document released under the Official Information Act. Available from PPTA

⁵ Treasury Report, July 2013 [The Education Sector over the Long Term.](#)

⁶ Ministry of Education, July 2013 [Education Report: Determining At Risk Payments for Partnership Schools](#)



- 2.1.5. Opposition parties are also talking about school funding. Labour has committed to implement aspects of the SSSG, and all the major opposition parties are well-aware of the inadequacy of the decile based TFEA fund to address educational disadvantage, while wanting to maintain the principle on which it is based. A number of parties, including Labour and the Greens have made announcements of SES targeted education policies which would give more resources to low decile schools.

2.2 Poverty and inequality

- 2.2.1 Growing economic inequality in New Zealand, is clearly related to educational inequality, leading to questions about how schools are best funded to address this. While the 10% of New Zealanders on lowest incomes have seen their incomes increase by only \$1300 from 1984 to 2011, the wealthiest 10% gained nearly \$44,000.⁷ Educational experiences are increasingly polarised, with the proportion of Pakeha students in decile 1 and 2 schools steadily declining over the last two decades. Young New Zealanders are particularly likely to be in poverty, with over 205,000 young people living in families on less than 50% of the median wage.⁸

- 2.2.2 Recent work from the [Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Child Poverty](#) identified education as a key area of government policy to make a difference to this particularly vulnerable group. While decile funding (the TFEA component of the operations grant) contributes only 3-4% of school funding (less for high decile and more for lower), evidence suggests that giving young people from low SES backgrounds educational opportunities similar to well-off students costs significantly more than that.

2.3 Collaboration

- 2.3.1 There are growing pressures for schools to work more collaboratively as the failings of the current competitive model become increasingly apparent, yet the funding model currently incentivises competition. Self-managing, largely autonomous, schools have not led to either greater innovation or better student learning. Cathy Wylie has noted the importance of creating structures that bridge gaps between schools for success to be shared and to promote greater equity,⁹ yet it is difficult currently to fund groups of schools to create on-going structures to work together.

2.4 Problems with decile system

- 2.4.1 The existing decile system is inadequate to address the educational inequity of social disadvantage and it has become misused as a comparative measure of schools. Decile ratings are used by real-estate agents, and ambitious school leaders, as a marketing tool.

⁷ Rashbrooke, M. 2013. *Inequality, a New Zealand Crisis*. Wellington : Bridget Williams Books, p. 28

⁸ Child Poverty Action Group, 2014 [Our Children, Our Choice: Priorities for Policy](#).

⁹ Wylie, C. 2012. [Vital Connections, Why we need more than self-managing schools](#) Wellington: NZCER Press



The recent move by ERO not to publish decile ratings in their reports recognises this. More significantly, while the achievement gaps between high and low decile schools persist, it is reasonable to ask, are we doing enough to address the resourcing needs of learners in low decile schools?

- 2.4.2 Though the evidence is clear that out of school factors are always the most significant determinants of school achievement, it is also true that in New Zealand our schooling system does not mitigate against the impact of SES as well as some other systems. Accepting that the resources available make a difference to learners' experiences, there is a strong case to be made that one of the reasons for this inequity is inadequate resourcing for low SES students.

2.5 Changing pedagogies and more individualised learning

- 2.5.1 Both technological change in education and the philosophical shift towards a more individually responsive, student centred curriculum have significant costs. Perhaps more significantly, the different practices and structures of schools and changing pedagogies may require a different funding mechanism to enable them to occur in a systematic and equitable way for all learners. This is explored in the Future Focussed Learning Report from May 2014.¹⁰

2.6 Locally raised funds

- 2.6.1 Schools rely overwhelmingly on locally raised funding to sustain programmes of learning, through employment of hundreds of additional teachers beyond the staffing supplied by the state and to supplement operational and property costs. It is common for large secondary schools, for example, to employ ten or more teachers above their staffing entitlement, often relying on locally raised funds. In 2012 the total amount raised by schools in local funding was \$541,777,892.¹¹ Reliance on these funds can create tensions between schools and parents, and also feeds into educational inequity.

2.7 Lack of security in school resourcing

- 2.7.1 In recent years small but increasingly significant changes to school funding have decreased certainty around budgets. This includes the move to quarterly funding of operations grants, which penalises schools with high student transience, and the bulk-funding of trades academy students. One impact of this is increasing numbers of teachers being employed through operational funding on fixed term agreements. Furthermore, neither school operational funding, nor staffing salaries, has any guaranteed mechanism to keep pace with rising costs. Contrast this to the political decision to fund charter

¹⁰ 21st Century Learning Reference Group, May 2014, [Future-focused learning in connected communities](#).

¹¹ [Question for written answer, New Zealand parliament](#), January 2014.



schools with guaranteed increases based on a CPI/LCI mechanism each year.

2.8 Awareness of behavioural and special education needs

2.8.1 Currently the IHC is preparing a human rights case against the Ministry of Education for systematic discrimination against special needs students. IHC's Director of Advocacy Trish Grant says that "We know that many schools acknowledge their response to disabled students is limited by resourcing and other constraints. It is clear that government policy does not allow all schools to do their best by disabled students." She goes on to say, "One of the biggest problems schools face is the lack of resources. Many schools have no choice but to limit attendance whenever support is unavailable. Parents are often asked to contribute financially to teacher aide hours because of a funding shortfall, the only other option being that their son or daughter is sent home."¹²

2.9 Staffing formula penalising large schools and junior high schools

2.9.1 SSSG clearly identified the problems that large schools and junior highs face in maintaining class sizes that are reasonable for teachers, and meet parents' and students' expectations. In large secondary schools of over 1800 students, nearly 60% of classes have more than 25 students, while in schools of up to up to 900 this is less than 40%. The Labour Party has committed to implementing the SSSG recommendation to fix this, which is welcome, but a cross party consensus to deal with the staffing formula is a more certain way to ensure this inequity is resolved.

2.10 Economic recovery?

2.10.1 Spending on education is already a significant chunk of the government's budget, at over \$10 billion in 2014 (with secondary education at \$2.1 billion). Nevertheless, moving to a needs-based funding system will necessarily cost more. Schools and communities will not accept a re-arrangement of funding in which some lose out – a clear base line must be that no-one will be worse off. As a result of this, beginning the discussion at a time when government revenue is increasing and there are predictions of steady economic growth will be more likely to bode well.

2.11 Starting the discussion

2.11.1 The problem with discussions of changing resourcing models is that such changes in the past three decades have often been proposed by politicians or officials driven by ideological imperatives or a desire to cut funding or impose business models.

2.11.2 Consultation with the sector has been tightly controlled and ignored if it does not reflect the outcomes desired by the government organisations or the government.

¹² IHC, 2014. ['IHC takes education discrimination complaint to Human Rights Commission'](#)



2.11.3 This paper is an attempt to start a broad-based discussion about the issues which need to be discussed and on which we need to develop consensus as a country.

3. What do we want schools to do?

- 3.1 Fundamental to decisions about funding of schools are beliefs about the purpose of schooling.
- 3.2 Currently the Government determines what 'schools are for' for funding purposes. This is often an ideological position that conflicts with the expectations of parents and the broader community. The net result, compounded by the competitive schools model in which they operate, is financial pressure on schools and a major reliance on locally raised funding. Key questions include:
 - 3.2.1 Are secondary schools solely about producing NCEA results? If they are not, how do we recognise and resource other outcomes that are desirable?
 - 3.2.2 Where is the line between the educational experiences the school is expected to provide and those that parents can be expected to provide?
- 3.3 In the early 1970s in New Zealand there was a bold attempt to engage parents, communities, teachers and students in a broad discussion about the purpose, content and structures of education. This has never been attempted on the same scale since, but the ideas of that Education Development Conference, though rejected by Muldoon, influenced education policy deeply over the following decades¹³. Perhaps it is time for another such broad ranging discussion?

4. What could 'needs-based' mean?

In discussing the development of needs-based resourcing we need to be clear what we are considering. Needs-based may mean:

4.1 'Schools generally are under-funded and need more resources.'

- 4.1.1 This definition focusses on the needs of the education system as a whole and would suggest that the needs of student across the system are not being met by current low funding to schools.

¹³ See for example Educational Development Conference, 1974 Educational Aims and Objectives Wellington, New Zealand : A.R. Shearer, Government Printer



4.1.2 The NZCER surveys of secondary schools conducted in 2009 and 2012 found that only 5 percent of principals thought that school funding was enough to meet the school's needs.¹⁴ Two thirds of principals reported that their school's financial situation was worse than three years before.

4.1.3 Looking globally, it is clear that New Zealand school funding is relatively low. In 2010 New Zealand, spent \$8,170 (in equivalent US dollars) per student per year, while Australia spent \$10,350, the UK \$10,452, Japan \$9,957 and Finland, \$9162. The OECD average is \$9,014. New Zealand has persistently spent less per student than these countries, while undergoing major educational reform.¹⁵

4.2 'Schools with the greatest needs get too little to meet those needs.'

4.2.1 This definition focuses on our disadvantaged students and a failure to properly direct the resources to counteract that disadvantage. It would focus on better redistribution to those with greatest need.

4.2.2 The level of deprivation suffered by children is worse now than in the past: child poverty rates (at 60% or less of median income) have risen from 14% in 1982 to 27% in 2014. Meanwhile, the schools that serve these populations struggle. Only 10% of principals of low decile schools think that their school is in a stable financial situation.¹⁶ As Treasury pointed out in the paper referred to above, there are concerns that the TFEA component is inadequate, and anyway it is only 3-4% of total school funding. Research from the USA has suggested that 40% to 100% more funding per student may be required to provide equitable learning opportunities for those from low SES backgrounds.¹⁷ That additional resourcing makes a difference for low SES learners was shown conclusively by recent US research which looked at what occurred when, in the 1970s and 80, some states were made to direct more resources into schools in low income communities. This found "...a 20 percent increase in per-pupil spending each year for all 12 years of public school for children from poor families leads to about 0.9 more completed years of education, 25 percent higher earnings and a 20 percentage-point reduction in the annual incidence of adult poverty..."¹⁸

4.3 'Schools are able to draw on different levels of additional resourcing.'

4.3.1 As a result of reliance on locally raised funds, schools have very different amounts of resourcing available to them. Focussing on this

¹⁴ Wylie, C. 2013. [Secondary schools in 2012](#)

¹⁵ OECD, *Education At A Glance 2013, OECD Indicators*. *ibid*

¹⁶ Wylie, C. 2013. *Secondary schools in 2012*. *ibid*.

¹⁷ Research cited in Wylie, C., 2013 *Schools and inequality* in Rashbrooke, M. 2013. [Inequality, a New Zealand Crisis](#). Wellington : Bridget Williams Books pp 134-147

¹⁸ Jackson, C., Johnson, R. & Persico, C. 2014 [The effect of school finance reforms on the distribution of spending, academic achievement and adult outcomes](#)



aspect of needs based funding would encourage a more radical redistribution towards those in greatest need.

4.3.2 In theory decile related funding is supposed to compensate for the educational disadvantage students from poor communities bring with them to their education by allowing schools that serve poor students to have greater resources available to bridge that gap. This currently is nowhere near the case.

4.3.3 When locally raised and decile related funds are added together, decile one schools have just \$350 more than those in decile ten schools to address their relative educational disadvantage – a fraction of the total (average) cost of educating a student each year, of \$6991.¹⁹ Comparing decile 1-3 schools with decile 8-10, the difference shrinks, with low decile schools being \$140 a year per student better off than the high decile. Contrast this to the Gonski funding review in Australia (see below), which recommended multipliers of up to 50% funding over baseline (for total funding, including staffing) for low SES students compared to their well off peers, with further multipliers for indigeneity, or isolation that could take the funding for students meeting these characteristics over 100% more than baseline.

4.4 'Funding should be student-focussed.'

4.4.1 The needs of the students should be identified and the resourcing should be provided to meet those needs. This definition focuses most on the needs of individual students and would lead to design of a funding system to meet those.

4.4.2 A recent Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) report on the schooling sector recommended that a range of student characteristics be identified on entry to school and funding directed on the basis of these.²⁰ Two possible methods of this suggested in the CPAG report are the School Entry Assessment tool and the B4 School check, the former focussed on learning preparedness and the latter on health and well-being needs. This would be a much more sophisticated method than what currently occurs with the mesh-block approach of decile funding which relies on generalised population data, rather than actual student characteristics. While this is potentially a demanding way to make decisions about targeting resources, and posing a number of risks, in this era of big-data it could be possible to design a system that does this safely and with integrity.

¹⁹ This is a different figure from the OECD one as it is based on different calculations, and this is in New Zealand dollars. This data is for 2013 costs including operations, staffing and property. Available from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/resourcing/per-student-funding>

²⁰ O'Neill, J. 2014 'Compulsory schooling and child poverty' part three of *Our children, our choice: priorities for policy* Child Poverty Action Group



5. An example of funding review and reform

- 5.1 One approach to funding an 'agreed standard' is suggested in the Gonski report.²¹ This would identify a number of schools that are providing a high quality education to all their students, meeting quantifiable (but wide ranging) standards over an extended period of time. These schools would then be assessed for the total resourcing that they receive, from all sources. Averaging these out would establish a rate, per student, which would become the 'resource standard' for staffing and operational funding, and would be guaranteed for all public schools. Gonski estimated that in Australia the resource standard would work out at around \$A10,500 per student per year.
- 5.2 Following the establishment of the resourcing standard, different multipliers would be applied based on the characteristics of students. The table below gives indicative values:

Table 20: Schooling resource standard loadings – indicative ranges

	From (lower end of range)	to (upper end of range)
School size and location	10% <i>for medium-sized schools in remote locations</i>	100% <i>for very small schools in very remote locations</i>
Low socioeconomic status	10% <i>for each low SES student in schools with under 10% of students in the lowest SES quarter</i>	50% <i>for each low SES student in schools with more than 75% of students in the lowest SES quarter</i>
Indigeneity	40% <i>for each Indigenous student in schools with between 5% and 25% of students who are Indigenous</i>	100% <i>for each Indigenous student in schools with more than 75% of students who are Indigenous</i>
Limited English language proficiency	15% <i>for each student with limited English proficiency</i>	25% <i>for each student with limited English proficiency (for example, recently arrived refugees)</i>

- 5.3 A formula like this would give schools with high numbers of low SES students potentially an extra AU\$5000 (based on the proposed resourcing standard) for almost every student at the school, compared to the extra \$140-\$300 for each student that is provided in New Zealand currently.

6. Prerequisites to change

- 6.1 In developing a needs-based funding model which can be seen as adequate, meeting its purpose and equitable, PPTA believes that the

²¹ Australian Government, 2011. [Review of Funding for Schooling – Final Report](#)



community first needs to reach broad agreement on what every child should be able to access in their local school and therefore what should be free (i.e. fully funded by the state) and what might be considered to be outside the responsibility of the school to provide (and the state to fund).

- 6.2 As noted earlier, the Ministry of Education does not know what it costs to run a 'well managed' school; there is no agreed standard, just the 'historical accident' of the funding formula and rates that have been arrived at currently. With an agreed standard it would be easier to judge the costs of meeting that standard education and the additional costs associated with those who begin with an educational disadvantage.
- 6.3 Furthermore, a starting point for the discussion must be that, while there could be opportunities for savings and reprioritisation of spending, no students or schools will be worse off under any new model, recognising that there is no 'fat in the system' to trim.
- 6.4 We also need to review the framework within which resourcing is provided and within which schools operate.
 - 6.4.1 Appendix 1 contains a number of questions which could form the basis of a national discussion about how we want to fund our schools.
 - 6.4.2 Appendix 2 contains a number of questions about more specific aspects of a needs-based funding discussion.

7. Leading Discussion

- 7.1 There are a number of implications in discussions of ways in which the resourcing of schools might change to a needs-based model. While ideally the quantum of resourcing is likely to increase, the pattern of distribution of that resource is also likely to change. This would require that the greatest possible level of consensus is reached about why changes are necessary and which changes are desirable before moving to make changes.
- 7.2 Considering the vast gulf between the resources available out of school, and if we consider education to be a social leveller, then a question that could stimulate this discussion would be, is five percent extra funding per student from a background of educational disadvantage enough to allow schools to compensate for that?
- 7.3 The education system is too important to be left as the ideological playground for politicians and unaccountable bureaucrats. The Education Ministry serves the government of the day (and is itself not always free from ideological bias).



- 7.4 No organisation operates in a policy-free environment, but the elected members of representative organisations could work together to lead a national debate on what the professionals and the broader community believe is appropriate for the delivery of education in New Zealand.
- 7.5 PPTA calls on those organisations to work together to lead a national discussion on the resourcing of schools.

Recommendations

1. THAT the report be received.
2. THAT PPTA seek to work with other representative sector organisations to initiate discussions on how state and integrated schools system could be resourced within a needs-based framework.



Appendix 1: What might the discussion include?

Indicated below are a number of the questions PPTA believes should be answered in broad discussions with the sector and with the wider community prior to any moves towards establishing needs-based resourcing.

Broad funding questions:

1. NZ funding of secondary level schooling is low compared to OECD. What is an appropriate level of funding to be directing into education?
2. What is the basis for developing a coherent resourcing framework for schools? Is it sufficient to aim for it to be adequate, student centred, equitable and efficient?
3. Should we identify what every school is expected to deliver as a suitable educational experience for every student in any school in the country in order to establish what it is the state's responsibility to fully fund, and what it is the parents' responsibility or choice to provide?
4. As the Ministry of Education states "... we do not have research or modelling that identifies how much it costs to run a well-managed school...", is it important to know the cost of providing a nationally acceptable programme of education to all students, and the associated administration, pastoral and guidance costs etc...?
5. When determining annual adjustments to education funding is the CPI and appropriate measure or should we establish an accurate education cost index and adjust operational funding for changes in the actual costs to schools?
6. Since 2011 governments have not automatically adjusted resourcing to schools to reflect demographic and inflationary changes. Should we expect governments to index funding to such changes?
7. The Education Act requires schools to provide a free education to all students, but almost all schools rely on parental donations/fees in order to maintain a nationally acceptable programme of education. Is the notion of a free education for all students still considered to be important to society? If so, how should this be reflected in the resourcing model?
8. If resourcing for secondary schools is agreed to be inadequate which method of providing additional resourcing would have greatest support? For example, transfers between government budget areas, a tagged increase in taxation, etc.
9. New Zealand is an internationally successful education system. What can we learn from the funding models of schools systems which produce outcomes which are equivalent or better than those of New Zealand schools?
10. Is the competitive, siloed schools model the most effective way of delivering and using educational resources? What other models are possible?



11. Do we think of schools (and resource them) as purely educational entities or do we consider them as part of the provision of a broad range of social services?



Appendix 2: Questions on components of a needs-based model

Operational funding

1. Can we identify through independent review the cost of delivering education in schools of different size and location?
2. How frequently should analysis of actual costs of delivering the benchmark education be reviewed?
3. Can we more accurately identify the funding required to address educational disadvantage associated with socio-economic status?
4. Can we identify more accurately the actual costs of establishing, running and updating administrative and teaching/learning technology?

Curriculum, pastoral and management staffing

5. Can we identify the staffing and delivery mechanisms required:
 - To deliver the breadth of curriculum expected in a state school?
 - To establish the class sizes parents want in schools and the staffing quantum and model required to provide this?
 - To provide the desirable level of pastoral and guidance support for students
 - To provide small group mentoring?
 - To meet the management and administration requirements of a modern school?
6. Can we identify any additional staffing component required to address educational disadvantage?
7. Should we provide a pool of national staffing entitlement for schools with special circumstances?

Special Education

8. Should we have an independent review the funding and staffing support required to support special needs students within our education system?

Property

9. What is the most efficient and effective way of managing school property?

Equity and fairness

10. Should local funds be managed through local trusts and be dispersed money equitably across the broader local network of schools?
11. Should we move to a decile profile model or individual student measures for equity funding?



12. How much extra is resourcing is required for the education of students from the lowest SES backgrounds to give them equitable education opportunities?
13. Should there be nationally agreed change management processes so that additional costs of new initiatives are built into planning and resourcing of change?
14. Should Governments be expected to maintain an automatic link between base line funding and demographic changes?
15. Should the state fund schools for cost increases?
16. Is contestable funding an appropriate model of funding for a national school system?
17. How can the state ensure that there is maximum security of funding for schools to allow them to plan for programme delivery within and between years?

E-learning

18. How do we recognise the resourcing requirements of delivering learning opportunities to students through e-learning and the adjustments required to employment provisions for e-teachers?

Information Technology

19. How do we identifying and address the costs of maintaining technologies which can be used effectively in teaching and learning and making these available to all students?

Professional development

20. How do we appropriately identify and resource the learning needs of the teaching profession?